

## Chapter 7: Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

God promised Adam and Eve that he would send a Redeemer, someone who would make up for original sin and the separation it caused between man and the Creator. Then God began his plan for our salvation by choosing a community of people, the Jews or Israelites. He sent prophets to these people to prepare them for the coming of the **Messiah**, the "Anointed One" of God. Most of the people expected a great and powerful military leader who would free them from political oppression. That this Savior would be God himself, come down to liberate them from their spiritual slavery to sin and the devil was not what they expected.

The prophets did give the people some clues about the Messiah, ways to recognize him once he came. They said that:

- He would be a member of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:8-10);
- He would be born of a virgin (Is 7:14) in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2-4).
- A great star would shine in the sky to announce the Messiah's birth (Num 24:17), and he would live for a time in Egypt (Hos 11:1-4).
- This Redeemer would preach God's good news to the poor and the lowly (Is 61:1-3), but he would be rejected by the people who would cause him much suffering (Is 53:1-12).

From among all the women of the chosen people, God selected one through whom he would fulfill his promise of salvation: the Virgin Mary of Nazareth. One day, he sent the angel Gabriel to announce to Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus. We call this event the **Annunciation**. Now, Mary was a virgin and asked how it would be since she had no husband. The angel told her that by the power of the Holy Spirit the child would be conceived in her womb. Mary, ready to do whatever God asked of her, expressed her consent. As soon as Mary expressed her consent to God's will, Jesus was conceived in her womb. Jesus was born nine months later and his **nativity** (birth) was announced by the appearance of the miraculous star. We call this event, by which the Son of God took on our human nature, the **Incarnation**.

### The Humanity of Jesus

For thirty years Jesus lived a normal human life with Mary and Joseph, working as a carpenter in the village of Nazareth. It is called his "hidden life", because during this time the people did not know who he really was and because we do not know very much about it. When Our Lord was about thirty years old he began what is known as his "public life", that is, the three years he spent preaching, teaching, and working miracles.

Jesus had everything that makes someone a human being: a physical body with all of its various functions, an immortal soul with its powers of intellect and will. As a man he had to grow daily in acquiring human knowledge, and he experienced the joys and sorrows of life just as we do. The Gospels remind us that he felt hunger and thirst (Lk 4:2); he loved children (Mk 10:13-16); he knew sorrow and cried over the death of a friend (Jn 11:32-36); he experienced loneliness (Mt 26:37-46); he enjoyed friendship (Lk 19:1-10); felt joy and gladness (Lk 10:21); he was tempted just as we are (Mt 4:1; Mk 1:13; Lk 4:2-13) and he went through suffering and death

(the accounts of the Passion in all four Gospels). Jesus was like us in all things except sin (Heb 4:15). This is because, as the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, he is all-holy.

### **The Divinity of Jesus**

A miracle is some event or happening that is beyond the powers of man or of nature. It can only be worked by God, who is the Lord and Master of all creation. The miracles of Jesus (calming the storms, walking on water, changing water into wine, raising the dead) were signs and proofs of his divinity. They showed that he was truly the Son of God.

The public life of Jesus began with his baptism in the Jordan River by Saint John the Baptist. At this time, the Holy Spirit came down upon Jesus and the Father's voice was heard to say: "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17) whereby he was publicly revealed as the son of God. During his ministry Our Lord spoke of himself as the Son of God, saying: "I solemnly declare it: before Abraham came to be, I AM" (Jn 8:58), "I AM" is the name God revealed to Moses in the burning bush. The event of the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8) shows the divinity of Christ. Jesus forgiving sins (Mt 9:5-6) shows that only God can forgive sins.

So we see from all of these events recorded for us in the Gospels that Jesus Christ is both God and man at the same time. We call this mystery the **hypostatic union**. This phrase comes from a Greek word which tells us that Our Lord is the son of God and the son of Mary, fully God with all of the divine powers, and fully man like us in everything except sin.

### **Heresies or Errors about the Incarnation**

Throughout the history of Christianity **heresies**, or errors about religious truths, have been taught by various mistaken followers of the Lord. Heresies are very dangerous to the faith because they corrupt or destroy man's understanding of the truth which leads to salvation.

The first heresy happened in the days of the apostles of the Lord; it was called **Docetism**. This heresy said that Christ was divine and only seemed to be a man. Some people believed this because they viewed the human body as evil; so God would not take on a real human body. The magisterium of the Church condemned these teaching as heresy, since everything that God created is good, including the human body.

Another terrible heresy was started by a priest who denied the truth about Christ's divinity. The priest's name was Arius and his false teaching was called **Arianism**. Arians believed that Our Lord was the Messiah sent from God, that he was the greatest of teachers and holiest of men, but they would not believe that he was divine. This heresy is that it attracted thousands of Christians, including many bishops. The first **Ecumenical Council** (meeting of all the bishops of the Church with the Pope) was held in order to condemn this false teaching officially. It was called the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.), and from this meeting we received the Nicene Creed, which we recite every Sunday at Holy Mass.

## Chapter 8: The Saving Mission of Jesus

Jesus always had his mind set on the Father, whom he loved with all his heart. He showed this deep love by faithfully doing the will of God, even if this meant suffering and hardship as in his Agony in the Garden or his death upon the Cross.

The Father sent Jesus to be his greatest **Prophet**, the teacher of God's truth. He was also sent to be our **Priest**, who offered himself in sacrifice to the Father, and our **King**, who came to start the Kingdom of God upon earth. We call these three roles of Christ his **triple office**.

**Jesus the Prophet, or Teacher**, helps us to reach Heaven by telling us how to live lives that are pleasing in God's sight. Only in Jesus' teachings do we find the way that leads to Heaven. Jesus said of himself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me" (Jn 14:6). By Baptism and Confirmation we are called to spread the faith to others by our words, good example, and apostolic effort.

**Jesus is our one true Priest** who is a mediator (behalf of) whose sacrifice on the Cross won for us the gift of sanctifying grace, which is the life of God in our souls. Every Christian shares in the priesthood of Jesus through the anointing received at Baptism and Confirmation.

**Jesus is our King**. Even before Jesus's birth, the angel Gabriel had revealed to Mary: "The Lord God will give him the throne of David. . . and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk 1:32-33). The Jews thought that the Messiah would be the ruler of an earthly kingdom, but Jesus meant that his Kingdom was spiritual. Everyone who lives in the state of sanctifying grace belongs to the Kingdom of Christ, which is the Church.

## Chapter 9: The Priesthood of Jesus

The idea of offering sacrifices to God has been part of salvation history since the days of the Exodus. The story of Cain and Abel tells us that God had accepted Abel's offering because he had a pure heart, while Cain's heart was full of jealousy toward his brother. The Bible also tells us that Noah offered an animal on an altar to God, thanking him for having spared his family during the great flood and acknowledging God to be Lord and Creator of the earth. The book of Leviticus tells us that these sacrifices were commanded by God as a way of showing sorrow for sin. Through these offerings the chosen people hoped to obtain forgiveness.

We learn from the Bible **three very important things about offering sacrifices to God**:

1. The gift must be offered with a pure or sinless heart.
2. The offering is a thanksgiving to God for his blessings and protection.
3. The offering of sacrifices shows sorrow for sin and a desire for forgiveness.

These Old Testament accounts of sacrifice also remind us that **three things are required for every offering**:

1. **A priest**, someone to do the offering. In the Jewish nation God himself selected certain men to be his priests.
2. **A victim**, something to be offered. God told the Jews to offer certain animals, especially the Passover lamb.
3. **An altar**, somewhere for this offering to take place. For the Jewish priests the altars of sacrifice were located in the Temple.

### **Jesus Our Sinless High Priest**

Jesus is called our High Priest, which means that he is the greatest priest of God because he was sinless. Melchizedek was a king of Salem (later called Jerusalem) and a priest who offered bread and wine to God in sacrifice. Saint Paul tells us that this is why he is compared to Jesus. No one else had offered the gifts of bread and wine, before Christ.

### **Jesus Our Sinless Victim**

Along with being the Priest of his sacrifice, Jesus was also the Victim. His altar, or place of offering, was the table of the Last Supper and the Cross of Calvary: two different places but only one Priest, one Victim, and one Sacrifice. At the Last Supper Jesus the perfect Priest offered himself to the Father under the appearances of bread and wine. While on Mount Calvary, Jesus offered himself on the cross. He was the Victim, but this time it was a bloody, painful offering. By his death, which the Lord offered for us, the one true sacrifice for sin was finally given to God. The Resurrection of Jesus shows that God had accepted the sacrifice of his Son.

### **Jesus Our One Mediator**

Besides the offering of sacrifice the priest had the duty of praying for his people, asking God to look upon their offering and to forgive their sins. This is called mediation, and the priest is a "go-between", or mediator. As man Jesus is our one, perfect mediator. He prays to the Father for us (1 Tim. 2:5).